

Buschberghof Case Study

Schleswig-Holstein, Germany

Introduction

Buschberghof CSA is situated 35 km east of Hamburg/Schleswig-Holstein in Northern Germany. The CSA is based on 86 ha of land and provides a wide variety of produce to its members.

Getting started

The farm was converted from a privately owned biodynamic family farm into a Community Land Trust (gGmbH) in 1968, to ensure biodynamic farming in perpetuity. The idea to set up a CSA was initiated in 1988 by three farmers, making Buschberghof the first CSA farm in Europe.

Wolfgang Stränz of Buschberghof CSA comments; "When the CSA was started in 1988, only half of the farm capacity was used by the community of 40 families, the other half of the harvest was still conventionally sold at the farm shop. After it became obvious that Community Supported Agriculture could be a sustainable solution for the farm, the sales at the shop were stopped and the remaining customers were asked to join the CSA scheme."

In 1973, the farm started to work with adults with a mental handicap. Today there are 12 adults working in the stable, on the vegetable fields, in the greenhouses and in the dairy. They live permanently on the farm. The responsibility for this work is in the hands of the Community Land Trust.

After 23 years, the CSA no longer has a core group – which is deemed unnecessary, although it does still have a treasurer.

Land and produce

Buschberghof CSA's objectives are to prevent the soil from becoming a commodity and the farm from being indebted. The farm is rented to farmers who agree to meet three preconditions:

- To farm biodynamically
- To agree not to sell any piece of farmland
- To attempt to avoid accumulating any debts for the farm

The formal owners (the shareholders of the gGmbH) meet once a year, read the annual report and ensure that farmers renting Buschberghof are upholding these principles.

Production is divided up into five divisions:

- arable farming,
- cattle,
- vegetables,
- milk processing
- bakery.

This diversity allows the CSA to provide food for over 300 people which equates to more than 90 households.

Produce includes more than 50 different varieties of summer and winter vegetables, , ● potatoes ● grain ● flour ● thirteen sorts of bread which is baked on two days a week ● cereals ● milk ● butter ● eggs ● yoghurt ● three different hard cheeses ● a variety of soft cheeses ● quark ● buttermilk ● buttercheese ● beef ● pork ● poultry ● lamb ● sausages ● fruit when available.

Members collect produce weekly from one of 14 pick-up places on the farm and around Hamburg and surrounding areas.

The farm has had Biodynamic certification (Demeter) since 1954. Harvesting, processing and preparation of food are all done on-site.

Membership

Every year the farmers present a provisional budget for the year ahead and the households make pledges according to their financial capacities. If the expenses are not met, the budget has to be cut or additional pledges found. Households then get food from the farm according to their needs - the quantity of products per household has nothing to do with their contribution to the budget. In 2009/10 the overall production amounted to 330 000€.

Communication with members is mostly done by email, and the team describe their marketing as '100% direct'.

Community involvement

Activities on the farm include weeding, collecting potato beetles and cabbage butterflies, farm walks, as well as social events such as festivities and general ecological events.

Future plans

The CSA hopes to eventually acquire more land, and to reduce the waiting list of participants by encouraging neighbours to establish a CSA as well.

Lessons Learned

"Enough!"

Contacts

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